

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DIVISION OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
BUREAU OF FISCAL SERVICES

ACCOUNTING POLICY

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| TOPIC: Section 12--Travel 1.1 | EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/5/89 |
| TITLE: Exceptions to Lodging Cost Limitations | REVISION DATE: 1/15/03 |
| AUTHORIZED BY: Cheryl Thompson, Deputy Director | PAGE 1 OF 3 |

POLICY

Individuals traveling on State business for meetings or training are expected to stay at lodgings where the cost is within the state reimbursement limits as stated in the DER Uniform Travel Schedule Amounts (UTSA), Chapter 228 of the Department's Supervisor's Manual, **Section 12--Travel 1.0** (Travel and Lodging Provisions) and **Section 12--Travel 1.2** (Maximum Reimbursement for Lodging in High Cost Out-of-State Cities). The maximum amounts identified represent single occupancy, first class rates, without reflecting discounts. **These amounts should not be exceeded except under the most unusual or exceptional circumstances.**

Procedures to justify approval above the limits are stated below. Requests must be approved in advance by the Division Administrator/Office Director, who may delegate this further. This may not be delegated further than Bureau Directors. If the Division Administrator/Office Director further delegates this approval authority, a signed statement identifying the designee must be forwarded to Harlan Olson in the Accounts Payable/Preaudit Section - Bureau of Fiscal Services.

These procedures have been approved by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Services and cannot be waived by any other office.

PROCEDURES

1. These procedures apply to both state employees and non-state employees regardless of the source of funds (state or federal) used to finance the trip.

If these procedures are not followed in advance, the individual will be responsible for any costs beyond the maximum payable under the Department rate schedule. Individual cost liability may not be required where compliance was attempted, but actions beyond the control of the individual precluded full compliance with the procedures.

2. For out-of-state travel, where appropriate, the "high-cost city" lodging rate may be claimed as listed in **Section 12-Travel 1.2** (Maximum Reimbursement for Lodging In High Cost Out-of-State Cities). A request may be made for a "comparable city" rate if the city is not listed in this policy and the requester, with Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee approval, seeks a higher approved rate. In order to request this rate, contact Harlan Olson in the Accounts Payable/Preaudit Section - BFS at (608) 267-9301. In lieu of a "comparable city" rate, a higher rate may be approved under the policy described in item 3.
3. The Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee may permit the employee(s) to stay at a documented conference site where lodging costs exceed the maximum permitted amount if it enables the employee(s) to gain professional benefits due to interaction with other attendees. No additional statement of justification is required. Employee(s) should include a statement on the Training approval request (i.e. requisition form) such as "I am staying at the conference site and request a lodging rate, including applicable taxes, which exceeds the maximum allowable amount." The training approval signed by the Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee must be attached to the employee(s) travel voucher or payment voucher when it is submitted.
4. Requests to stay at a facility with a rate that exceeds the in-state maximum allowable rate and does not meet the criteria in items 2 or 3 must include a written justification to the individual employee's supervisor before the expenditure is made. The justification must meet the criteria outlined below.
 - a. The lodging location is sufficiently convenient to the training or meeting location so that a net cost savings will result from the individual staying at that location, as opposed to staying at a facility priced within the maximum but requiring transportation or other access expenses. The savings can be estimated but the basis of the estimation must be described. For instance, car rental rates, or usual taxi fares from travel publications can be used.

The amount of savings is calculated by determining the cost that would be incurred by staying at a facility priced within the maximum but where the employee would have to pay transportation or other expenses to attend the meeting.

Reasonable estimates of savings to the state can be automobile rental or taxi fare, or other meeting access costs (such as parking) which would be incurred if lodging was elsewhere. A maximum of \$20 per day in transportation and access charges may be considered reasonable when estimating the savings.

If alternate reasonable facilities were within close proximity (a city block or two), no transportation charges may be used in calculating the savings.

- b. The site of the training session or meeting is so located that there are no other reasonable facilities in the area at which an individual can stay. "Reasonable" means a mid-level rated "two or three diamond/star" lodging establishment. (These ratings are found in Mobil, AAA, and Best Western tour books, etc.)

The term "not in the area" means that the lower cost facility is a distance of more than ten miles from other facilities, or that there is no transportation available if the facilities are closer together.

- c. Special accommodations for handicapped individuals or other medical needs may be considered and approved.
- d. Other very unusual and extenuating circumstances defined as travel emergencies (i.e. breakdowns or storms).

After determining that the justification meets the criteria, the supervisor will refer it to the director (bureau/institution) for review and submission to the Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee. Divisions may, at their option, have the employee submit the request and justification directly to the Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee.

Division Administrator/Office Director or delegated designee approval must be in writing and attached to the voucher with the cost justification. If a blanket approval for multiple employees at the same site has been granted, a copy must be attached to each voucher claiming reimbursement.

REFERENCES

DHFS APP **Section 12-Travel 1.0** (Travel and Lodging Provision)
DHFS APP **Section 12-Travel 1.2** (Maximum Reimbursement for Lodging in High Cost Out-of-State Cities)

CONTACTS

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